

# DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP



A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

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## Boys Books and the American Dream

By John T. Dizer, Jr.



DIME NOVEL SKETCHES No. 98

Booklet issued by Davis & Elverson  
to advertise its popular story paper SATURDAY NIGHT.  
See page 12 for description.

## Boys Books and the American Dream

By John T. Dizer, Jr.

This Paper was delivered at a Colloquium of the Faculty of Mohawk Valley Community College, Utica, New York, March 29, 1967

I'm not real sure what I'm doing here today. I think it's a classic example of what happens when you can't say no. My topic is "Boys Books and the American Dream" or: The Story of the Tom Swift Boat and His Engine Works. Notice the subtitle. All reputable series boys books have subtitles. I really don't know how this topic qualifies as a subject for a college colloquium but then I'm not sure what a colloquium is either. I was

telling my family about this and explaining what I was to do and my five year old daughter spoke up, "but Daddy, we do the same thing in kindergarten, only we call it show and tell." The show part is in the display case. This is the tell part.

Why do I collect childrens books, among other things? One story claims my mother was frightened by a pack rat shortly before I was born. My mother says she doesn't remember

### DIME NOVEL SKETCHES No. 98

This month's reproduction is of the front cover of a 16 page booklet issued by Davis & Elverson of Philadelphia. The booklet contained the first instalment (Chapters I/IV) of a serial begun in Vol. IV No. 40, dated 26 June 1869, of "Saturday Night" and concluded with two paragraphs to the effect that the continuation of the tale would be found in No. 41 of that story paper.

The booklet has a buff wrapper and measures 5 1/10 x 6 9/10 inches, and the front cover illustrations are those used in Vol. IV No. 40 of "Saturday Night." The title and by-line also tally with the serial and booklet looks just like a dime novel. The inside of the wrapper, both back and front, contains advertising blurbs for "Saturday Night" including, of course, the subscription price!

The back wrapper was printed, evidently, to the order of local newsagents stocking "Saturday Night." A copy of the booklet presented to the Rogers Collection by the editor of "The Round-Up" has the following advertisement on the back wrapper: M. MARDEN / DEALER IN / Newspapers, Periodicals, Magazines, / STATIONERY, &c. / ALSO, / OYSTER & REFRESHMENT SALOON, / WOODMAN'S BLOCK, MARKET STREET, / Amesbury, - - - Mass. / Ice, Creams, Soda water, Oysters, Dates, Figs, Raisins, Jujube / Paste, Rich Candy, Foreign and Domestic Fruits and Nuts. Also, / a good assortment of Pastry constantly on hand.

I do not know whether any other serial was ever used with this type of advertising gimmick. Presumably the booklets were only provided in the early days of "Saturday Night," after it had changed from a reform to a family story paper, but before it had established a national circulation. The booklet is attractive and may well have been expensive to produce.

—Denis R. Rogers.

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Published monthly at 821 Vermont St., Lawrence, Kansas. Edited by Edward T. LeBlanc, 87 School St., Fall River, Mass. Second class postage paid at Lawrence, Kansas. Assistant Editor, Ralph F. Cummings, 161 Pleasant St., South Grafton, Mass. Subscription \$3.00 per year. Ad Rates—9c per word, \$1.50 per column inch; \$3.25 per quarter page, \$4.50 per half page and \$7.50 per page. Ads should be submitted by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month in order to assure publication in the following month's issue.



it but from the evidence it may have been true. Another story claims it's because I'm an old line Yankee who can't bear to throw anything away—or let anyone else throw anything away. This I'm sure is partly true. You may remember how Mallory was questioned as to why he wanted to climb Everest and he answered, "because it's there." This answer has been used as an example of the response of man's indomitable spirit to a challenge, but I personally suspect he had been heckled by so many dull conformists that his classic answer was designed to kill the discussion. My feeling is much the same. Why do I collect? Because I want to. Look at it objectively. I could spend the same amount on liquor or women or similar forms of amusement but the returns, to me anyway, wouldn't be any greater. This way I've learned a lot about American history and culture and have met and corresponded with all sorts of interesting people. Besides, the kids and I always have something around the house to read.

My topic is headlined "Boys Books and the American Dream," as I've already noted. If I had more time and were more of a social anthropologist I could do the subject more justice. Instead, I'm going to talk trends, discuss a few of the major authors and possibly point out a few facts and ideas you may not be aware of. In fact this talk may remind you of the small boys book report on cats. The entire book report was as follows: "This book told me more about cats than I really wanted to know."

What is this American Dream? What effect could boys books have on it? Who was responsible for spreading and perpetuating a belief in the American Dream? Is there any virtue in the American Dream and do people still believe in it? These are good questions and I'm not going to answer them. But I'm going to talk about them.

In connection with the term "American Dream" we commonly assume the following:

1. Hard work and diligence will

bring just rewards. Hard work itself is a virtue and being a virtue will be rewarded.

2. The American society is basically a classless society and any worthy boy, by effort, ingenuity and persistence can succeed to positions of responsibility and financial success. "From log cabin to white house" is accepted as a legitimate goal.

3. Opportunities exist in all sorts of enterprises. The young American may be an Indian fighter, boot black, gold miner or circus performer.

4. The moral virtues, particularly those we consider typical of the biblical wisdom literature, are unquestioningly accepted. Honesty, cleanliness, thrift, industry, charity and sobriety are accepted as desirable qualities to be cultivated and encouraged. Chances of personal success, presumably, will increase as these qualities are developed.

The characteristics mentioned above are common to many people's concept of the American dream. This dream may be a stereotype, it may be fading, it may never have been true, but it played a large part in the development of America. John Tebbel writes, "In contemporary terms the dream is often regarded as our 'image,' the aspect we present, or believe we present, to other peoples, and endless controversy surrounds it. The fallacy in this concept is that it does not take into account the radically different 'images' held by differing groups of Americans." He also comments, "A far more important difference is the popular vision of the nation, nurtured by the stereotypes which pass for American history in our educational system, and the general view held by those who have made a professional study of that history." This, to me, is as important as worrying about whether Shakespeare's Julius Caesar present Roman history accurately. The point is, there was an American dream, and dream or reality or combination of both, it dominated American life for at least a hundred years.

A strong influence in perpetuating this dream was childrens literature,



particularly the so-called nickel and dime novels and the boys and girls hard cover series books from the Civil War period on. It is possible to examine in some depth the guidelines established by certain publishers for their writers and thus to say the publishers were responsible for the social patterns of their output. It is possible to prove that many dime novel or series writers wrote from a strong conviction of what should or should not be presented to youthful readers. It seems a bit ironic that writers like Adams, Alger, Patten, Stratemeyer, and Garis should be criticized for producing heroes of unbelievable virtue and manliness while at the same time their writings were called sensational, lurid and unfit for youthful consumption. It is also possible to assume that, since the literature of which I am speaking was commercially successful, it reflected current social attitudes or possibly common aspirations. I would emphasize that the books which influenced and influence young Americans are the ones they read or read. This may be an obvious truism but it is one which is often missed in the smokescreen of vituperation against series books which emanates from those self-appointed creators of Good Taste in Juvenile Literature. More American boys were influenced by Frank Merriwell's ideas of fair play, manliness and physical fitness, more boys were stimulated by Alger's commands to Strive and Succeed and more boys developed a leaning toward invention and engineering from Edward Stratemeyer's Tom Swift books than from all the award-winning juveniles ever published.

I sometimes wonder whether librarians are more concerned with the quality of series books or unhappy with their commercial success. A single book may be a classic but if the demand for more adventures of the hero produces a series of books with the same characters in new situations then the author is tarred as a hack writer pandering to popular tastes. The books that I collect are books that no self-respecting librarian will

admit exist if she can help it, let alone have in the library. These are the books that are virtually ignored in histories of childrens' literature, except as horrible examples to avoid. It is both interesting and pathetic to see the frantic efforts most of these writers make to push their brand of literary history. Occasionally they slip. In "50 Years of Childrens Books" Dora V. Smith, writing about the "Landmark Story" notes, "children wait for the next Landmark book much as an older generation waited for the next Little Colonel book or the next Tom Swift title." I'm sure this allusion will be changed in the next printing—if there is one. Quite often their vituperation gets away from them as when Miss Smith (I'm sure she has to be Miss Smith) quotes the following from Alice Jordan's book "From Rollo to Tom Sawyer": "Oliver Optic, a school principal, had written one hundred and sixteen books in cloth bindings exclusive of those he produced in paper, among them his Young America Abroad series, filled with drunken youths at sea, gambling, pillaging, and stealing." The first part of the complete reference in Jordan's book is as follows: "Oliver Optic, who was responsible for the issue of 116 volumes, in cloth bindings, not published by Beadle but by more reputable firms, was the pen name of a Boston teacher and school principal. His books were circulated freely and long by public libraries. In the 1875 catalogue of the Cambridge Public Library seven series by Optic are listed, and other libraries agreed in naming him as among the most popular fiction authors, whose works were read by men as well as boys and girls. Some contemporary reviews called his stories pure and ennobling, 'improving the taste and elevating the mind, while at the same time they stirred the blood and warmed the heart.' Yet before his death his books were ruled out of most public libraries." Then Jordan tears into Optic, somewhat as Miss Smith noted. The Jordan book itself is certainly not objective to start with but the par-



tial quote by Smith is obviously less so. Let me read you two actual and random samples from Optic. From "The Yankee Middy" written in 1865, "but with Kennedy's glazing eyes still before his vision, he felt how vain was all human glory. He readily obtained permission to return to the bedside of the dying rebel, and hastened down into the steerage for the Testament which his mother had given him, and which had not been an unused companion in his leisure. He found Kennedy was sinking fast, on his return, and, with the patient's ready permission he read to him a chapter from his testament." One from "The Boat Club": "Perhaps my young friends cannot fully appreciate the amount of satisfaction which a parent derives from the good character of the child. Though the worthy shipmaster had a beautiful estate and plenty of money, if his son had been a liar, a thief, a profane swearer—in short, if Frank had been a bad boy—he could not have been happy. If a wise and good father could choose between having his son a hopeless drunkard or villain, and laying his cold form in the dark grave, never more to see him on earth, he would no doubt choose the latter." Now I think you will admit, regardless of the literary quality of the above, that it doesn't sound too much like the "drunken youths at sea, gambling, pillaging and stealing" impression. Whatever you may think of Oliver Optic, my quotes are a lot more typical than theirs.

Miss Smith, in a section called "The Immortal Four" discusses with obvious relish the attack by another librarian on Finley, Optic, Alger and Castlemon. I have already given her comments on Optic. Let me read quotes from the rest of the section. "The last quarter of the 19th century saw the tremendous spread of cheap, tawdry fiction, akin to the dime novel, one hundred or more books written according to an established pattern by a single author. Caroline Hewins, from her vantage point as librarian of the Young Men's Institute in Hartford,

Connecticut, struck out against "the immortal four." They were Martha Finley (pseud. Martha Farquharson), author of the *Elsie* books; Horatio Alger, Jr.; William Taylor Adams, popularly known as Oliver Optic; and Charles Austin Fosdick who wrote under the name of Harry Castlemon. Horatio Alger's errand boys who carved new roads to fortune were bombastic heroes setting forth false values—Harry Castlemon's Frank on a Gunboat—and the like harked back to the days when the author had run away from home to join the navy during the Civil War. Miss Hewins worked through letters to the press, talks to parents, and, above all, through vigorous promotion of better books to offset the influence of the series." Having demolished the popular writers of the last century, she took care of this century in one paragraph. Let me read part of it also. "Then came the syndicate for mass production of cheap juveniles. Tom Swift celebrated his fiftieth anniversary in 1960, having apparently thrown the glove to English teachers and librarians as early as 1910. His first inventions were a motor cycle, an electric runabout, an airship, and a submarine (1910). Today Tom Swift Junior is busy in the caves of nuclear fire (1956) and with his ultrasonic cycloplane. In 1908 Edward Stratemeyer had formed his syndicate to turn out boys' books on a mass production basis. He wrote some one hundred and sixty books under syndicate pseudonyms, fifty or so under his own name, and devised plots for about eight hundred others which were farmed out to hired hacks." Calling writers like Howard and Lillian Garis "hired hacks" is a little extreme, even for librarians. I am forced to believe that such writers dislike series books so thoroughly that they are incapable of a fair evaluation of them. Incidentally, series writers occasionally get back at Librarians. In "The YMCA Boys of Cliffwood," by Brooks Henderley, a part of the story concerns an unpleasant and narrow-minded librarian (male,



in this case) who will not permit wholesome, action-filled boys books of good moral tone in the town library, so the YMCA boys, with adult help, start their own library. Eventually the librarian sees reason, of a sort.

The point here is, and it is important, that librarians and English teachers tend to emphasize, I was about to say "push," "good" literature for children; the carefully written, well printed, beautifully illustrated, and expensive books that picture life as they want it presented to the children. But children, and even adults, don't like being spoon-fed beautiful literature. They want a story. They want action. They want characters they can identify with. They don't have to have a plausible story to enjoy it. Escape literature is none the worse for being escape literature, regardless of whether it is science fiction or Frank Merriwell at Yale. And when children like a story they want another with the same characters in other situations and so the series are born. I certainly hold no brief for all series books as the epitome of juvenile literature. Many series, however, are carefully plotted and well-written, and to categorize all series books as trash, as is so often done by librarians, shows a rigid intolerance more typical of a bible-belt evangelist than an enlightened educator.

There are two significant points in this digression, or diatribe if you prefer. The first point is that the series books were and are tremendously popular, to the evident sorrow of the authorities. A second point is that series books are recognized as having a significant impact on the young, (harmful of course), whose pliable little minds must be molded to an appreciation of finer things by a judicious application of the proper juvenile literature. Both points are pertinent to my theme. Let me repeat, it is the books children read, not the ones they are supposed to read, which have the impact.

Getting back to my theme. In the time available I can only mention the

impact of the dime novel and such publishing houses as Beadle & Adams and Street & Smith. Before mass production as we think of it was known, these publishers—and many others—were flooding America with the 5 and 10c action-filled novels which some of you have seen in the show case. Buffalo Bill and Nick Carter became household words. Incidentally, Ned Buntline, the popularizer of Buffalo Bill, lived north of here at Blue Mountain for some time. Many writers wrote both for what we would now call the pulps and for the more respectable hard cover book publishers. I should not like to minimize the influence of Edward Ellis, Harry Castlemon, or L. Frank Baum, just as examples, all of whom were, or in the case of Baum still are, tremendously popular but I want to talk today about just four men, the four who I think have had the greatest impact on America. They are William T. Adams who wrote mainly as Oliver Optic, Horatio Alger, Jr., Gilbert Pat-ten who was Burt L. Standish and at least a dozen other names, and Edward Stratemeyer who was Arthur M. Winfield, F. W. Dixon, Allen Chapman, Victor Appleton and Laura Lee Hope plus many others. All of them wrote for the dime novel publishers and the dime novel market, all of them were apparently acquainted, all of them used a similar literary formula and all of them were tremendously popular and influential. The first was Optic. I have already given two quotes from him and indicated the esteem in which he is held by librarians, though as Jordan honestly admits, he used to be perfectly socially acceptable. Optic wrote from 1853 until his death in 1897. He was a Sunday-school teacher for 20 years, principal of Harris School in Boston for about 20 years and editor of various magazines from 1858 to the 1880s. You may have noticed the Oliver Optic magazine for 1868 in the display. His fame, however, is based on the series of stories he wrote which started with the "Boat Club" in 1854. The "Boat Club", incidently,



went through 60 editions. His first series were so startlingly successful that he followed them with several on the Civil War, the Army and Navy series, and the Blue and the Grey series being just two.

Optic was so popular that 17 serials which had appeared only in "Golden Days" magazine were published in book form in 1912, 15 years after his death and did quite well. I have indicated the general moral tone of Optic's books in the quotes I've already given. The philosophy was one of moral uplift, plenty of action, general acceptance of the social customs of the time with rather more preaching than today's youth would buy.

Compared to many other juvenile hard cover books of the period, however, which were designed to educate only, Optic reads well. He entertained, at least, and the boys could accept a reasonable amount of moralizing if the entertainment were there. A little known aspect of Optic's life is the encouragement he gave Alger when "Holy Horatio" was reluctantly deciding whether to come to New York to write. Both Optic and Alger published about the same number of books, Optic supposedly 116 and Alger supposedly 117 and both were active about the same period, since Alger died in 1899. Their backgrounds were quite different. Alger had studied to become a minister and had published his first book quite unsuccessfully in 1856. Not until his publication of "Ragged Dick" in 1868 did he hit his stride. From then until his death and even afterwards Alger poured from the presses.

It is interesting in passing to note that Alger was not a best-selling author in his lifetime with the one exception of "Ragged Dick," and that his total sales were not more than 800,000 at the time of his death according to Frank Luther Mott and John Tebbel. It was when the paperback publishers started reprinting Alger in 10c and 25c editions that Alger really sold. Even so, a reasonable sales figure is about 16 or 17 million in all. However book sales do not in-

dicade the number of readers and Alger's influence extended far beyond the 800,000 readers who actually bought his books during his lifetime.

Most of Alger's books concerned life in New York City and all were based on the same theme, poor boys who succeeded, generally in business, either slum boys of the city or country boys who came to New York. The significance of Alger has been analyzed in countless papers. His stories fitted the times and the changing patterns of postwar America of the 70s and 80s. He re-stated Franklins and Emersons thoughts on the values of human individualism and the old Puritan values of piety, courage, thrift, alertness, and hard work. His books provided a picture, of sorts, of contemporary economic life. As imperfect as they are they contain a detailed social documentation which has been compared to Dickens, without, however, the reform elements of Dicken's novels.

Alger's books were made real to his readers, as Russel Nye says, "by life itself, for they embodied the great American dream that any right-thinking and right-acting American boy could by Struggling Upward succeed in Finding a Fortune." Let me correct two popular misconceptions about Alger's books. First, his heroes did not become millionaires, they became moderately wealthy only. Secondly, while it was necessary to work hard and practice all the virtues, it was a lucky break somewhere along the line that almost always made the difference. Wealthy merchants, saved from harm by Alger's heroes, invariably gave them jobs and the prospect of a partnership and marriage with the merchants daughter generally as well. Alger emphasized that traditional middle-class virtues were still important in the competitive urbanized society of the late 1800s, and in addition gave a good deal of practical information on living and getting on in the big city. It is possible to say that his books helped ease the transition from a rural to an urban society. (to be continued)



## NEWSY NEWS

By Ralph F. Cummings

W. R. Johnson, 901 Barbour Ave., Norman, Okla. 73069 hopes when he retires to have more time to collect his old favorites, and become friends all over again with the old timers of long ago. He sent me a clipping about a self-taught flyer still in the air after celebrating his 80th birthday. (The Norman Okla., transcript, Thurs. Feb. 2, 1967, by William E. Scrivo)—Lorain, Ohio (AP) Back in 1917 William H. (Bill) Long enlisted in the U. S. Army, figuring his nine years of flying experience would qualify him to serve as a pilot. But after "10 days of exercises and running around" said Long, "they called me in and told me they were sending me home because of a palpitating heart." Long, who now wears a flowing white beard, recently celebrated his 80th birthday and he's still flying. Long has accumulated 8,000 hours in the air since he taught himself to fly back in 1908 by circling a Bleriot monoplane around the old race track in Lorain. He taught himself because there were no instructors. He circled the track on the ground for many times before he lifted the plane off the ground for a short hop. Long's craving to fly was implanted in him by an Uncle who wrote 5 cent novels about flying machines in the 1890s, and was therefore classed as a "nut." Three Lorain men who acquired a used Bleriot monoplane around 1908 asked Long to help them restore the craft to flying condition. That was a few years after Long, who drove Lorain's first taxi, a White Steamer, had gone into the auto business.

So you see, the old 5c novels win again. No doubt the Chamber of Commerce could provide the address of Mr. Long, then they could check on who the uncle that wrote 5c novels on flying machines, really was. Lu Senarens wrote 5c novels (Frank Reade Library) in the 1890's, so no doubt the uncle is him, but it would be a good idea to find out for sure,

as the author of the Tom Edison also wrote flying stories in the Nugget Library in the 1890's too.

Prof. Richard S. Sprague, 235 Stevens Hall, University of Maine, Orono, Maine 04473, is wondering if there is any connection between J. Springer and John S. Sprenger who wrote "Forest Life and Forest Trees," in 1851. A book about lumbering up in Maine.

Mr. Sprenger also wrote six dime novels in the George Munro Ten Cent Novels. Any one have any of these novels—Nos. 9, 11, 16, 19, 49 and 67 in the series as described in Denis R. Rogers' bibliography in Dime Novel Roundup, October 1958? If it turns out the authors are the same, Prof. Sprague would like to obtain copies, photocopies, or microfilm copies for the University of Maine, State of Maine collection. First he needs to establish the identity of the J. Sprenger of the dime novels.

Ken Daggett of Gardiner, Maine, H. H. Bro. #28 took a drive over around Bluehill and So. Penabscoot, Maine, for a couple of days, and decided to call at the S. B. Condon home, as he hadn't been over there for a couple of years. He found the place was still in the Condon family, and met a middle aged man who happened to be Mr. Condon's son, who Ken had never met before. They had a chat and Ken told him how he had been there 3 or 4 times and met the father, and how they would talk on the old nickel and dime novels of long ago, and so forth. The son told Ken that his father died Dec. 4th, 1965. He had been a member of the H. H. Bro. for a good many years. He was 89 when he died. S. B. Condon, Ken says, was quite a guy—his home sets on a little hill, the largest and best in the village. He told Ken, at one time, that his den was stuffed with stuffed animals he had shot, also books and curios, as well as old 5c novels too.

Edward Ingraham of Havertown, Pa., says after he read the Newsy News in the Roundup some time back, that it brought to his mind of his own school days many years ago. He



remembers when he read a number of the Laura Jean Libby books, and was wondering if I had a paper bd copy of "Kidnapped at the Altar," and sure enough I had, so I sent it right down to him in a hurry—Ed sure enjoyed that book.

Eli A. Messier of Woonsocket, R. I., still remembers the first time he became interested in the old time dime and nickel novels—says he had the thrill of his life, also when he became a member of H. H. Bro. and Dime Novel Roundup.

Dr. John W. Machen, 6331 Belair Road, Baltimore, Md. 21206, loves to read the old 5c weeklies, when he has the time to read, but lately he has been plenty busy.

#### EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

Dear Mr. LeBlanc: Enclosed is my continued subscription to the Dime Novel Roundup. It is the most waited for piece of mail I get. What would us old collectors do without it. I look at my dime novels, but I read the Roundup over and over.—John P. Ball, Chicago, Ill.

Mr. LeBlanc: I am interested in getting information about the origin of Jacques Barnes adventures which appeared in newspapers here in France. I suspect that his name was Bill Barnes and that his adventures appeared in magazines as well as comic strips. Could you answer the following questions:

1. Was Jacques Barnes of France truly the Bill Barnes of America?
2. Was it published as a magazine? Did it appear in a comic strip? Who was the publisher? Was it illustrated?
3. What were the dates of his appearance?

Pierre Couperie, 28 rue Daubenton, Paris 5, France.

(Can anyone help Mr. Couperie?)

Dear Mr. LeBlanc: I am happy I joined the Brotherhood—it has put me in touch with a number of new

friends with whom I correspond regularly and has made it possible for me to add many good items to my collection.—John W. Machen, M. D., Baltimore, Md.

#### RECENTLY PUBLISHED ARTICLES CONCERNING DIME NOVELS

MILWAUKEE JOURNAL, Sunday, October 8, 1967—YESTERDAY'S HEROES. Anonymous. Text of article paraphrased from items issued by Charles Bragin. Of special interest is a full page illustration of Tip Top Weekly No. 228 in full color. Other illustrations include Tip Top No. 1 and Nick Carter Weekly No. 544. — (Thanks to H. O. Jacobsen who sent in a copy of the article.)

AMERICAN FARM & HOME ALMANAC, 1968—THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY. Anonymous. Short article on railroad robberies. Illustrated with one of Street & Smith's Jesse James Stories.

THE BULB HORN, 15 Newton St., Brookline, Mass. 02146. EARLY AUTOMOTIVE SCIENCE-FICTION by Doc Mundhenk. Short article about dime novels. Of significance because of its 16 illustrations of dime novels with covers featuring automobiles.

Back numbers Reckless Ralph's Dime Novel Roundup, Nos. 1 to 237, some reprints, 12 for \$1.00 or all for \$21. Sent postpaid. You also get Dime Novel Catalogue, Birthday No. 2, indexes, #1 Pioneer and Scouts of the West.

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## REPETITION OF CHARACTER NAMES IN THE MERRIWELL STORIES

by Gerald J. McIntosh

(continued from last issue)

"Doc" Fisher was a cowboy with some knowledge of medicine and surgery in Tip Top No. 70. Clement Fisher was a chum of Chip Merriwell, making his appearance around New Tip Top No. 100, or thereabouts, and continuing up into the later pulp magazine Merriwell stories. Strangely, he, too, was a medical student, and was called "Doc" Fisher. Thus we have two "Doc" Fishers in the tales. Another character whom Burt L. called Fisher, but to whom he gave no Christian name happened along in Tips 656 to 659. He was a railway station agent at Spear Head, Wyoming, near Frank's ranch.

No doubt there were other duplications in names of characters, but the above are all I have in my "data." Possibly I didn't catch them all.

But hold! There is yet another. HIGGINS! That is the name which seemed to intrigue Burt L. Standish more than any other. There are at least a dozen instances in which Standish conferred this name upon his characters, each time a separate and distinct person during the course of the Merry stories. I may have missed others but don't think so.

First of all the long line bearing this name was that of Bill Higgins, "The Roper From the Cimarron." There was a cowpoke for you. He had been a friend to Buck Badger, back on the ranch of Buck's father, in Kansas.

While Buck was at Yale College, Bill Higgins came East and paid him a visit, first appearing in No. 198. Remaining there in several successive numbers, he became a good friend of Frank Merriwell. His antics in and around New Haven and on the Yale campus with Buck, Frank and their chums furnished some of the most ludicrous and laughable moments of that period of Tip Top Weekly in those great tales we loved so long ago. Especially funny is an example of his talk to the Chickering "set" and of

his disdain for all of them, and, notably, how he made a "dog team" of the whole of them at an ice-skating party one winter day. Excruciatingly funny. Frank Merriwell had occasion to meet Higgins again after Bill had returned to the ranch in Kansas. On one of Frank's athletic tours, he and his ball team paid a visit to the Badger ranch in Kansas and played a game there in Tip Top No. 229 and Higgins was one of the characters in the story. This was in 1900, mind you. (On the front cover of No. 229 there was a good drawing of Bill Higgins in cowboy costume). They probably met again between times, but in New Tip Top No. 110, in August of 1914, fourteen years later, just before the Weekly folded, Frank Merriwell, out West had a reunion of a few of his old time chums, which took place at Skyline, Kansas. Bill Higgins was in attendance and he was now the Marshal at this little town. They met for the last time here at a "Cowboy Carnival."

In Tip Top No. 65 there was also Bill Higgins, and he, too, was an officer of the law. He was a separate person from the above Higgins. In this number of the Weekly he arrested Bart Hodge during the famous Bicycle Tour. (Two Bill Higgins', and both of them officers.)

In No. 116 we find a Deputy Sheriff, first name not given, by the name of Higgins. In this copy he arrested Frank M for "robbery". (Three in a row, all named Higgins, and all of them "lawmen".)

But not all of the Higgins line were on the side of the "law." In No. 714 a ruffianly, lawless game warden went by the name of Hop Higgins.

A saloon-keeper, surname Higgins, was a character in No. 703.

Another character named Higgins was that of a railroad engineer on page 9 of Tip Top No. 503.

When we read No. 659 of the Weekly we find Hiram Higgins, an old



time westerner, driving a covered wagon thru the pages.

"Dumpling" Higgins, a cattleman, was one of the characters in No. 728, who, he said, "a long time ago," saw Frank Merriwell pitch a baseball game.

There was a Bob Higgins, presumably a cowboy, in No. 565.

And another Bob Higgins, a race horse owner, in No. 668, page 11—therefore two Bob Higgins' in the stories.

And we must remember Sam Higgins, first appearing in No. 513. He was a pupil at Frank's School at Bloomfield, and was in many succeeding numbers.

Last of the Higgins clan I recorded appeared in No. 746. His first name not given, he was a cooks' helper in one of the outdoors camps or camp-outs in which the Merriwells participated.

Standish often crossed himself up in the matter of writing the name of Inza (Burrage) owing to the oddity of the name, probably. When he was quoting her name he often spelled it out I-n-e-z. And also when Bart Hodge and Brad Buckkhardt were in a story together upon mentioning either of them, he often said Bart when he meant Brad, or Brad for Bart, sort of vice-versa, etc.

Oddest name I think I ever saw, that is a Christian name, was that of Peeper. Peeper Kipp was the name of a baseball player on the Smoketown ball team in the Pine-Point-Smoke-town series of baseball stories, in No. 590 and later copies. An odd surname was Huglippe. Hugh Huglippe was a team mate of Kipp's in the same numbers. I don't think I ever saw either of these names outside of Tip Top Weekly.

My list of titles of the Merriwell tales and short "digests" of these stories comprises 586 standard size typewritten pages, on one side of the paper only and bound into two handsome volumes. If both sides of the pages had been typed it could have resulted in, I should say, one volume

about the size and thickness of one of the books by Prof. Albert Johanssen on the Beadle publications published in the early 1950's. The list of character names could they have appeared in succession, would fill several pages of the volume. It would be an enormously long list and as I said above, I think there would be sufficient persons for a fair-sized city. (It must be understood of course that in the last 200 or so of the Merry tales written, the names of most of these characters did not come from the brain of Gilbert Patten, but from the writers who substituted for him and used the name of Burt L. Standish as a pseudonym. My list of titles of Merriwell tales stands now at 1032, by Patten and other writers. I have read all of them; at one time I owned them all, though not now.

Writing a "serial story" as long as the Merriwell saga was, and as long as it lasted, with ever changing scenes, naturally required that many a person flit thru its pages. It sure took a lot of time, patience and brains to look after it all. No wonder Burt L. Standish made a "bobble" now and then, repeating a character name, but who could have done as well?

One might jokingly say that Standish had so many in the tales that he ran out of names, and had to use some of the names twice, etc. But that of course, would be rather absurd. Of course it was coincidence. Nothing more. It was a great job, indeed!

(NOTE: The figure of 1032 Merriwell tales given above does not include the 18 tales of Owen Clancy in New Tip Top Weekly. Perhaps it should do so as most old Tip Toppers look at it thus, tho not once in these 18 copies did any Merriwell appear. If included, this makes the total 1050. Add to this the dozens of magazine and newspaper articles where Merriwell was the theme, and Merriwelliana from other sources, books, etc., and I shouldn't be surprised at the number reaching up or even beyond the 1200 mark. I have many of these



items, but not all by any means. Readers, send me any and all dime novel data, especially that you have or may get on the Merriwells, Tip Top Weekly or Patten-Standish, which you do not care to keep yourselves. I will be very grateful for same in order that I may add it to my large Scrap Book of Merriwelliana.—GJMc.)

### RECENTLY PUBLISHED ARTICLES CONCERNING DIME NOVELS

**BASEBALL IN AMERICAN FICTION**, by Ralph S. Graber, Department of English, Muhlenberg College, Allentown, Penna., appeared in **ENGLISH JOURNAL**, Vol. 56 No. 8 November 1967. One part of the article is devoted to baseball stories appearing in dime novels. The author's knowledge of dime novels was limited to those reproduced by Charles Braggin. However, the article is well worth reading. (Sent in by John Ditzer.)

### A DIME NOVEL COLLECTOR'S BOOK SHELF

**SETH JONES**, by Edward S. Ellis and **DEADWOOD DICK ON DECK** by Edward L. Wheeler, edited by Philip Durham. Published by Odyssey Press, Inc., 55 5th Ave., New York, N. Y. 10006. 1966. 183 pages, \$1.50, paper covers. This is a reprint of two dime novels published for the college trade. The book is well put together on quality paper. Mr. Philip Durham has written a good introduction which gives the dime novel its place in the tradition and legend making of American popular literature. (Brought to my attention by Denis R. Rogers.)

**TRAPS FOR THE YOUNG**, by Anthony Comstock. Edited by Robert Bremner. Published by The Belknap Press of Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. 1967. This is a reprint of a book originally published in 1883. Comstock was a notorious reformer and had more influence than probably any other single person in the field of "morals" and his thinking is reflected in much modern criticism of both dime novels and cloth bound series books. Mr. Comstock indicts the dime novels for the ills and immorality of the young generation of his day. (Sent in by John Ditzer.)

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